

GRETHE BALIF PETERSON

- ★ **Graduated from BYU in History and French**
- ★ **Did Graduate Work at Radcliffe College, Southern Connecticut State College, Harvard College, and the University of Utah**
- ★ **Instrumental in the foundation of The Children's Justice Centers in Utah**

Born in Provo, Utah, the youngest of four children, Grethe Peterson grew up in the loving environment of an extended family, with a grandmother and other relatives living just down the street. She remembers Provo as a small university town where her father, an attorney, was able to be closely involved in her upbringing.

Grethe's entire education from grade school to college took place on the Brigham Young University campus. She first attended BYU's laboratory schools, then graduated from BYU with a bachelor's degree in History and French. She later did graduate work in management at Radcliffe College (Harvard's counterpart before women gained admission there). She has also done graduate work at Southern Connecticut State College, Harvard College, and the University of Utah.

She draws the most pleasure in her life from her wonderfully sensitive and good children and grandchildren.

The Children's Justice Centers in Utah, which she helped found, have been a great source of satisfaction to her. As a result of being called to jury duty in a sexual abuse case, she witnessed what she thought was injustice in the courtroom; specifically the way children were treated. The courtroom environment was frightening to them since they had to face the accused. They were unprepared for what they had to do, and as a result of this and other factors, the jury had to find the father of the child not guilty. Grethe was haunted by the verdict and started consulting with all the professionals from the judge to the social workers. There was a consensus that there must be a better way.

After receiving the support of the Governor's office in forming a task force to look into the issue of child abuse and the courts, we created a new program called the Children's Justice Centers, which are a homelike setting where children who are to testify in child abuse cases are brought in and interviewed by specialists. The interviews are taped and played in the courtroom, so children do not have to confront their accusers in the court setting. The program has made a huge difference in the outcome of child abuse cases. There are now 14 CJsCs in the state.

Because she was surrounded by great female mentors in her family, she has always considered being a woman an advantage in life. Her mother was a community activist who served on the Provo School Board for 25 years and also served in the Utah House of Representative. Her aunt, Esther Peterson worked as a lobbyist for the AFLCIO long before women were accepted in the world of labor leadership and was later appointed as Consumer Advocate in the Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter Administrations, establishing guidelines for content in all consumer products. Both of these women were inspiring as well as intimidating at times.